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The Case of Weapons of Mass Destruction at the Outset of the Iraq War

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CHAPTER ONE: A WAR OF PREEMPTION

The world changed after 9/11. American foreign policy was forced to take a more aggressive stance against potential threats throughout the world. By implementing the Bush doctrine, President George W. Bush sought to reform American foreign policy by waging a preventive war against terrorism and the countries that harbored terrorists. After 9/11 the primary target of the United States was Afghanistan where the Taliban ruled and those responsible for the terrorist attacks were located. By waging war in Afghanistan the Bush administration launched a full assault against terrorism in order to ensure the safety of the United States. Besides Afghanistan, Iraq was another country high on the administration's priority list due to possible ties to terrorism as well as the potential threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The Bush administration identified Iraq as one of the biggest threats to the United States because of the previous history between the two countries. The dictatorship of Saddam Hussein represented a major threat to the United States due to its potential for WMD along with Saddam Hussein's prior use of chemical weapons. The WMD being addressed consist of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. While all three are their own separate entity, they can all be considered as WMD. Aside from its potential capability of WMD, Iraq also held a strategic position in the Middle East economically and militarily. From a diplomatic standpoint, there were many reasons why the Bush administration chose to invade Iraq in March 2003, however none was so great as the possibility of Saddam Hussein wielding the power of nuclear weapons.

In a post-9/11 era, the Bush administration knew that it could not take any risks nor rule out any possibilities. However, the Bush administration could not launch an invasion of Iraq based on pure speculation. For this reason extensive research was carried out to determine the extent of Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program. In order to conduct an invasion of Iraq and overthrow its government, the Bush administration needed solid evidence to support its claims. The intelligence gathered by the Intelligence Community leading up to the March 2003 invasion proved to be the deciding factor in whether or not the United States invaded Iraq. Based on the research gathered, the Bush administration concluded that it should launch an invasion of Iraq as a means of preventive war. The Bush administration justified the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by saying that there was strong intelligence pointing to the existence of WMD stockpiles. Furthermore, the biggest motivation for the invasion was rooted in the possibility that Saddam Hussein was developing nuclear weapons. If Saddam Hussein did not already possess nuclear weapons, there was a strong possibility that he would in the coming years. This is significant in relation to the Bush administration's motives because after the invasion of Iraq no WMD were actually found, spurring the notion that the main reason for invasion was nonexistent. This led many people to believe that there was a failure of intelligence going into the war and that possibly the Bush administration had ulterior motives for waging war in Iraq. However, the fact that no WMD were found after the U.S. invasion does not mean that they never existed. There is the possibility that any evidence or material relating to WMD in Iraq was either destroyed or it still has not been found. Saddam Hussein's refusal to cooperate with weapons inspections and United Nations Security Resolutions over the years left many officials skeptical about whether or

not he had something to hide from the rest of the world. Either Saddam Hussein did have WMD that he needed to keep hidden, or he wanted people to believe that he had WMD for the security of Iraq against other nations. Many people thought that Saddam Hussein did have chemical and biological weapons and he was in the process of developing a nuclear weapons program. Nevertheless, the intelligence played an integral part in the decision for the United States to invade Iraq and therefore the accuracy of the intelligence leading up to the war was the deciding factor in whether or not the Bush administration would make a well-informed decision.

Regarding the intelligence going into the war in Iraq, several possibilities exist. One possibility is that the intelligence was accurate and the Bush administration interpreted it properly. This possibility implies that the Intelligence Community and the Bush administration acted appropriately in carrying out their duty. The second possibility is that the intelligence was gathered properly and it was unbiased; however, the Bush administration interpreted it in a manner that would support its motive to go to war. The final possibility is that the Intelligence Community did not properly gather intelligence because it received pressure from the Bush administration to attain a certain result. If this assumption were true, both the Intelligence Community and the Bush administration would be at fault because the intelligence was gathered in a manner that would produce a certain result and also the Bush administration influenced the intelligence without any regard for the actual truth but instead for the sake of creating a cause for war. The problem one must confront is determining which one of these possibilities is most likely the truth. If the Bush administration decided to invade Iraq because there was solid intelligence that supported the existence of WMD in Iraq, then

the United States' reason of protecting itself from WMD in the hands of a dictator would have been justified. Many believe that for the sake of national security, the possibility of an attack was reason alone to take action. However, if the Bush administration influenced the gathering of intelligence in order to produce a biased result that supported the existence of WMD, then the war in Iraq would have been conducted under false pretenses and the motivation for war, which was given to the American people, and the rest of the world would not have been legitimate.

The Iraq War was conducted as a means of prevention. President Bush, in his war ultimatum on March 18, 2003 stated "The danger is clear: using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other."¹ One belief is that it was unfinished business from the previous Gulf War and the Bush administration felt that it was in the best interest of the United States to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Following 9/11 the Bush administration took the offensive in waging a war on terrorism and Iraq was included in this offensive. However the primary reason for war that was presented to the American people was the belief that Saddam Hussein had WMD stockpiles. The question that must be asked is whether or not the Bush administration had the right to tell the public that the reason for waging war was the existence of WMD in Iraq. To answer this question one must explore the content of the intelligence as well as how it was used to fully understand the magnitude of the situation.

¹ John Ehrenberg and eds. *The Iraq Papers*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 110-113.

When examining the intelligence that was gathered going into the Iraq War, one must consider every possibility when forming an opinion. Due to the fact that the war in Iraq has only recently ended and that the United States still maintains a presence in the country, it has not been long enough to know all of the facts. When gathering intelligence regarding WMD one cannot expect to have all of the information readily accessible. This is especially true in the case of Iraq where a dictator like Saddam Hussein refused to cooperate with weapons resolutions for years. However, we must hope that based on the intelligence that we do have, officials are confident in the decisions they make. In the case of Iraq, we must hope that officials in the Bush administration considered all of the intelligence and weighed all of the options dispassionately before arriving at the decision to go to war. If this is not the case and instead there was a failure of intelligence or the Bush administration used the intelligence in a way that would support its motives, then allegations of WMD in Iraq were fabricated to gain the support of the American people. On the other hand, in a post-9/11 era, the Bush administration might have felt that it could not take any chances and even the smallest inkling of a nuclear threat deserved the administration's undivided attention along with preventive military action. After taking this into consideration, one can determine whether or not the potential existence of WMD in Iraq was a legitimate reason to go to war.

Critics of President Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq make the following argument. While the war in Iraq may have been a preemptive war in the best interest of the national security of the United States, the reasons for war were exaggerated due to an intelligence failure and the misrepresentation of intelligence by the Bush administration.

The Bush administration did not want to risk the threat of Saddam Hussein's growing WMD program and therefore it took preemptive action by launching an invasion of Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein from power. While this action may have been perceived to be in the best interest of national security, it was carried out under the notion that Iraq had ties to terrorism as well as WMD. The problem lies in the fact that the Bush administration did not have sufficient evidence to make these claims to the public as justification for going to war. While the existence of WMD was the primary issue in regards to Iraq, the Intelligence Community did not provide conclusive evidence to support this claim. Furthermore, the Bush administration failed in the sense that it presented the intelligence to the public in a way that would support its motives.

Following the Gulf War of 1991, Saddam Hussein repeatedly ignored UN Security Council Resolutions 687 and 1441 as well as mandated UN weapons inspections intended to ensure that Saddam Hussein was not reconstituting his weapons programs. Due to the fact that Saddam Hussein refused to cooperate with the rest of the world and he had already used chemical weapons in the past, the Bush administration was left to believe that he had something to hide and that he posed an imminent threat to the United States as well as the rest of the world. The decision to invade Iraq in 2003 can be attributed to the Bush Doctrine and the plan to take preemptive action against any nation that harbors terrorism or poses a serious threat to the United States. However the 2003 invasion cannot be attributed to solid evidence of Iraq's possession of WMD. While some intelligence does exist that Saddam Hussein did have the potential for WMD and he did have possible ties to terrorists, this intelligence was not formidable enough for it to be presented to the American people as a justification for war.

The president's defenders respond that the situation can be viewed from another perspective. Due to Saddam Hussein's constant refusal to comply with weapons resolutions or weapons inspections, many were left to believe that he had something to hide. Instead of risking the possibility that Saddam Hussein did have weapons stockpiles and not taking action, the Bush administration decided that for the sake of national security it had to remove the dictator from power because of even the smallest possibility that WMD were present in Iraq. There was some knowledge of chemical and biological weapons programs in Saddam Hussein's arsenal, and he had already used chemical weapons in the past. While the intelligence may have been weak regarding the presence of WMD stockpiles in Iraq, the Bush administration felt that it was better to be safe than sorry. In many ways the Bush administration misled the public by saying it had strong evidence of the existence of WMD; however, it was doing so for the greater good of national security because it did not want to risk another tragedy. Furthermore, even though we never located any kind of nuclear weapons program or WMD, the possibility still remains that they did exist or there was some level of development however they were either destroyed before we could get to them or they were transported out of the country or they are still hidden. There are many reasons why the Bush administration wanted to go to war in Iraq. However the existence of WMD was the one reason that would win the approval of the American people along with the rest of the world and make the war appear justified. For the sake of foreign policy and national security, regime change in Iraq was in the best interest of the United States.

To understand the course of events leading up to the 2003 war in Iraq as well as how the intelligence was gathered to arrive at the decision one must look at how officials

use intelligence as a means of conducting foreign policy, at the intelligence that supports the Bush administration's decision to go to war based on the existence of WMD, and at evidence of misinterpretation and failed intelligence which was used to support allegations of WMD and give cause for war. These three things provide the necessary information for one to decide whether or not the potential existence of WMD was a legitimate reason for the Bush administration to give to the American people as a reason for war.

I will begin with an overview of the president's role in conducting foreign policy. This will provide information on National Intelligence Estimates, which are given high consideration when making decisions, and how presidents can take certain actions to politicize intelligence. From there I will look at the actual intelligence that supported the existence of WMD as well as the Bush administration's case for why WMD were present in Iraq. This can be found in the National Intelligence Estimate of October 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations in February 2003, President Bush's speech in Cincinnati in October 2002. After examining intelligence that supported the Bush administration's claims, I will then identify areas in which there was a failure of intelligence. Here I will draw on several sources including the Senate Select Committee's June 2003 report, The Iraq Survey Group Final Report, the personal account of George Tenet, and the personal account of Ambassador Joseph Wilson.

Prior to the war the Bush administration made the situation appear as if WMD were in Iraq and the United States needed to confront the threat they posed to national security. The Bush administration based this on intelligence that they claimed was

conclusive. The fact of the matter is that the intelligence was not conclusive and there is a great deal of evidence and personal accounts from top officials that prove this.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT AND INTELLIGENCE IN CONDUCTING FOREIGN POLICY

In order to understand how the intelligence was gathered and how it was used by the Bush administration in the context of the Iraq War of 2003, one must first understand the general process of how intelligence should be used by the President and his officials when conducting foreign policy. There are many ways to interpret intelligence and this can have a serious effect on the manner in which foreign policy is carried out. When it comes to foreign policy, the President has the final say in what action the United States is going to take. However this does not mean that the President makes his decisions alone. In almost every decision, the President consults with his closest advisors, known as “senior” and “junior” participants.² He does this so he can make the most informed decision possible in the best interest of the United States. In the case of intelligence, the President relies on the Director of Intelligence along with people from the State Department and Defense Department to produce national intelligence estimates.³ Presidents rely on National Intelligence Estimates to make important decisions. In fact, the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate was the primary piece of evidence for the President’s conclusion that there were WMD in Iraq. This brings up the subject of how the President and his participants should use intelligence. Intelligence can be very useful to a President in providing him with valuable information about a current international situation. However, intelligence in many regards is just information and it should not be misconstrued as facts. The President and his participants are supposed to

² Morton H. Halperin and Priscilla A. Clapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 16

³ Ibid, 17

use intelligence as an aid to help them make foreign policy decisions. However, the President should never use intelligence to his advantage by interpreting it in a way that might supplement his own administration's personal agenda. When conducting foreign policy it is imperative that the President and his participants treat intelligence as raw, unbiased information that may not be completely factual.

When conducting foreign policy, the President and the rest of his participants form foreign policy objectives that they feel are in the best interest of the United States. However in order to decide whether these objectives are feasible or even valid, extensive analysis is carried out. Through analysis the President and his participants can rule out any possible flaws to their objectives. "When an analysis or a set of arguments substantially reduces the range of uncertainty and unambiguously points to the desirability of a particular stand, that position is likely to be adopted by most, if not all, participants."⁴ Based on this reasoning, effective analysis provides decision makers with valuable information, which they can use to make sound judgment and rule out any unlikely alternatives. In the case of the war in Iraq, the Bush administration believed that Saddam Hussein had WMD. However, it was only after the Intelligence Community performed in-depth analysis on the matter that the Bush administration decided it was likely. More importantly, the Bush administration labeled Iraq as a potential nuclear threat within the next decade and the Intelligence Community confirmed this notion. However, the manner in which the Intelligence Community conducted its analysis and the way the Bush administration interpreted it remains a problem.

⁴ Ibid, 20

Many times, and especially in the case of Iraq, actions of foreign policy may receive strict scrutiny from the public. As a way to persuade the public and gain its favor, a President might present his decision from a slightly different angle even though it might not be the exact reasoning behind the decision.⁵ Regarding the war in Iraq, one argument is that President Bush told the public that there was strong evidence for WMD in Iraq because he knew that this would gain the public's approval for going to war. If this happens to be the case, and President Bush oversold the data, there is an ethical dilemma in which President Bush misled the public, regardless of the fact that the invasion of Iraq might have been in the best interest of the United States. When gathering intelligence, the job of the analyst is to gather as much information on the subject as possible without attempting to slant the information in any way. From there it is up to the policymakers to interpret the intelligence so they can make informed decisions. In no way should an analyst attempt to draw conclusions from the intelligence because doing so would create a biased analysis. It is also the responsibility of the policymakers such as the President to respect all of the intelligence for what it's worth without using it for the sole purpose of perpetuating an agenda. The intelligence should not be misinterpreted to support foreign policy decisions but rather foreign policy decisions should be made based on solid intelligence. In the Iraq War one intelligence officer believed that the Bush administration "politicized" the intelligence in order for it to fit the administration's intentions of removing Saddam Hussein.⁶ Unfortunately politicization of intelligence happens a great deal and it is only one of the ways in which an administration can take advantage of intelligence.

⁵ Ibid, 78

⁶ Ibid, 147

The Intelligence Community as well as the President can make many maneuvers to try to affect the intelligence in a way that will depict a particular situation in a certain way. One maneuver a policymaker might employ is to report information that only supports his or her stand.⁷ By ignoring particular facts about a situation a policymaker can make his or her particular stance appear to be much stronger than it actually is.⁸ In particular, the intelligence community in Iraq continued to concentrate its analysis on certain areas and as a result the same analysis continued to be reported.⁹ Another maneuver is to arrange information in a way that will keep people from seeing certain information.¹⁰ By hiding specific information one can easily influence the perspective one might take on any particular subject. Furthermore, one can utilize people who he or she knows will provide a particular result.¹¹ In this way a policymaker can be sure that the analysis will convey the information exactly how he or she wishes. It is obvious that there are numerous methods to try to skew intelligence in a way that will support one's position. However, the fact of the matter is that all of these strategies are wrong and in many ways unethical. The gathering of intelligence should always be carried out in an unbiased fashion in which all of the facts are presented equally. From there the President and his administration should use the intelligence to make a logical decision. Because it is so easy to interpret intelligence in a way that might support one's position, the misuse of intelligence goes on all the time. However in the context of the invasion of a nation and a full-scale war in which the trust of the public and hundreds of thousands of lives

⁷ Ibid, 164

⁸ Ibid, 164

⁹ Ibid, 165

¹⁰ Ibid, 166

¹¹ Ibid, 168

are at stake, it is imperative that the intelligence process is carried out correctly from the point of view of both the President as well as the entire Intelligence Community.

CHAPTER THREE: INTELLIGENCE OF WMD AND THE CASE FOR WAR

While the Bush administration has received a great deal of scrutiny for allegedly conducting the Iraq war under false pretenses, there is evidence that supports the administration's decision to invade Iraq. From the outset, the reasoning behind possible military action in Iraq was preemption. Based on the reformed National Security Strategy of the United States in September, 2002, also known as the Bush Doctrine, the United States was going to take a preemptive strategy against terrorism as well as any nation that harbors terrorists or any nation that might provide terrorists with WMD. This new national security strategy adopted by the Bush administration was revolutionary in the sense that it abandoned any previous strategy of containment or defense and justified an offensive against enemies of the United States. This new strategy came about largely after the tragedies of 9/11 when the Bush administration realized that it needed to take a tougher stance against any nation or group that posed a threat to the United States. The Bush administration's argument was that if it hesitated to take action against any threats the consequence might be the destruction of an entire American city.¹² This created a sense of urgency within the administration. When addressing WMD, the Bush Doctrine states "The overlap between states that sponsor terror and those that pursue WMD compels us to action...The United States has long maintained the options of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security...the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively."¹³ Based on this newly adopted security strategy, the Bush administration identified Iraq as a threat to the United States and a possible target of

¹² Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 132.

¹³ U.S. President Bush, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America September 2002." Code of Federal Regulations, title3, pp.1-31 (2002).

preemptive action due to the possibility that it might use WMD or provide them to terrorists. Whether or not Iraq possessed WMD at the time was not as important as the potential threat that Iraq posed to U.S. national security.

The argument can be made that based on its new strategy the Bush administration could have targeted other nations with weapons of mass destruction such as North Korea or Iran. However the focus was on Iraq due to the fact that the United States had trouble dealing with Saddam Hussein ever since the first Gulf War, Saddam Hussein repeatedly refused to comply with UN regulations, and Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons in the past. The thought of nuclear weapons in the hands of Saddam Hussein was terrifying to the Bush administration and it wanted to avoid this at all costs. There were several claims regarding Saddam Hussein's nuclear capacity leading up to the war and whether or not he actually had nuclear weapons, however, the thought that he could possibly be developing nuclear weapons was reason enough for the Bush administration to get rid of him for the sake of national security.¹⁴ Even though Iraq posed a threat to the United States and its allies, the Bush administration could not conduct war on a whim and it could not justify war without any intelligence to support it. Ideally, the situation in Iraq would be handled diplomatically and military intervention would be used as a last resort. While regime change in Iraq may have been in the best interest of U.S. national security at the time, the Bush administration had to investigate all the possible scenarios and gather as much intelligence as possible before making any snap judgments.

¹⁴ James P. Pfiffner and Mark Phythian, *Intelligence and National Security Policymaking on Iraq: British and American Perspectives* (Texas A&M University: Manchester University Press, 2008) 62.

The Intelligence Community conducted a huge process of intelligence gathering on Iraq in order to find as much as possible about Saddam Hussein's weapons programs and the extent to which they posed a serious threat to U.S. national security. One of the main pieces of intelligence that supported Saddam Hussein's possession of WMD was the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of October 2002. To gain further understanding of the extent of Saddam Hussein's nuclear capabilities, the Bush administration instructed the Intelligence Community to come up with an NIE on the subject. The October 2002 NIE was largely conclusive in the existence of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq as well as the continuing development of WMD.¹⁵ The NIE also concluded that the completion of Iraq's first nuclear weapon was contingent upon how quickly it acquired weapons-grade fissile material.¹⁶ The NIE reported that once Iraq had weapons-grade fissile material, it "could make a nuclear weapon within a year."¹⁷ From the very beginning of the NIE it is evident that based on whatever intelligence it had, the Intelligence Community had reason to believe that Iraq's potential for nuclear weapons was strong and if they did not have nuclear weapons already, it would have them in the near future. The October 2002 NIE goes on to elaborate on Iraq's weapons programs and the threat they posed. The NIE addresses the fact that Iraq has failed to comply with UN Resolution 687 which was enacted in April 1991, and ordered Iraq to declare or destroy any WMD as well as cease any further development of WMD in the future.¹⁸ The NIE reports: "Iraq never has fully accounted for major gaps and inconsistencies in its

¹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. "National Intelligence Estimate October, 2002: Iraq's Weapons of Mass destruction Programs." (accessed October 19, 2010) 1.

¹⁶ Ibid, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid, 1.

¹⁸ Ibid, 3.

declarations and has provided no credible proof that it has completely destroyed its weapons stockpiles and production infrastructure.”¹⁹ Furthermore, the NIE reports that Iraqi security personnel took serious action to try to hide material relating to Iraq’s weapons program in an attempt to thwart inspections.²⁰ Based on the information provided by the NIE, one can see that Iraq continually defied the UN Security Council as well as misled the world in regards to its weapons programs and its nuclear weapons capabilities ever since the end of the first Gulf War in 1991. From the perspective of the Bush administration, it is obvious that the United States needed to take some form of action, whether diplomatic or military, as a means of eliminating Iraq’s potential threat to U.S. national security.

Iraq’s weapons programs were of great concern to the United States and the rest of the world ever since the end of the first Gulf War in 1991. Saddam Hussein’s previous use of chemical weapons made it clear to the United States that he still possessed those capabilities in 2002. However, the most important aspect that the Bush administration needed to know about was Iraq’s nuclear weapons capability. This information was crucial in the sense that it posed the biggest threat to national security. The intelligence on Iraq’s nuclear weapons program was essential in determining whether or not the United States should take military action. The NIE is very clear in pointing out that continued oversight over the years from the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has not reduced Saddam Hussein’s desire to possess nuclear weapons.²¹ According to the NIE “Iraq has withheld important details relevant to its nuclear

¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

²⁰ Ibid, 3.

²¹ Ibid, 5.

program, including procurement logs, technical documents, experimental data, accounting of materials, and foreign assistance.”²² Furthermore, many intelligence experts suspected that Iraq was attempting to acquire tens of thousands of high-strength aluminum tubes.²³ This was of major concern to the Bush administration. Although the aluminum tubes could also be used for conventional weapons, there was the possibility that they could be used in a centrifuge enrichment program in the development of nuclear weapons.²⁴ The NIE points out numerous times that the one major thing preventing Iraq from having nuclear weapons was the possession of fissile material.²⁵ It goes on to say that Iraq did not have the ability to produce this material indigenously for a long time and therefore it would most likely try to acquire the weapons-grade fissile material from somewhere else.²⁶ This raised speculation among the Bush administration that Iraq was trying to get this material from another country and if Iraq were successful in doing so it would be very close to developing a nuclear weapon. However, the NIE does not give any information regarding where Iraq might seek to obtain the enrichment uranium necessary to complete its nuclear capabilities. The October 2002 NIE also reports that in order to fund its nuclear program “Baghdad diverts some of the \$10 billion worth of goods now entering Iraq every year for humanitarian needs to support the military and WMD programs instead.”²⁷ The October 2002 NIE gives substantial evidence pointing to the existence of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq as well as the development of nuclear weapons. Although the NIE points out that Iraq has not been able to complete

²² Ibid, 5.

²³ Ibid, 5.

²⁴ Ibid, 5.

²⁵ Ibid, 6.

²⁶ Ibid, 6.

²⁷ Ibid, 23.

the enrichment process of its nuclear program, which happens to be the most difficult part, the NIE also makes clear Iraq's potential for nuclear power as well as Saddam Hussein's desire for nuclear power illustrated by his tactics of defiance and concealment. Judging by the content of the NIE, the Bush administration was wise to consider Iraq a threat to national security and a candidate for preemptive action.

Instead of jumping to conclusions and going straight to war, the Bush administration wanted to approach the situation with Iraq diplomatically and gain the support of the rest of the world. Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations on February 5, 2003, is an example of how the Bush administration attempted to justify its allegations of Iraq's potential nuclear threat as well as gain the support of the United Nations. Powell begins his speech to the UN with Resolution 1441, which was implemented "...to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction."²⁸ Powell says that Iraq has failed to comply with Resolution 1441. Powell goes on to say that his purpose "...is to provide you with additional information, to share with you what the United States knows about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction..."²⁹ Secretary Powell is adamant in his speech that Iraq has severely breached Resolution 1441 and that there should be consequences. Powell makes the case for the existence of biological weapons stating that Iraq has "...never accounted for all of the biological weapons they admitted they had and we know they had. They have never accounted for all the organic material used to make them. And they have not accounted for many of the weapons filled with these agents

²⁸ Colin Powell. "A policy of Evasion and Deception." *The Washington Post* (accessed October 19, 2010) 1.

²⁹ John Ehrenberg and eds. *The Iraq Papers*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 99-100.

such as there are 400 bombs.”³⁰ Powell goes on to address nuclear weapons saying that there is no suggestion that Saddam Hussein has discarded his nuclear weapons program.³¹ Furthermore, Powell proclaims in his speech that the United States has a decade of evidence that Saddam Hussein is still trying to get nuclear weapons.³²

Given the certainty of Powell’s speech, he makes it clear that Iraq still has WMD and continues to seek nuclear weapons. Powell proclaims to the UN that “leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option, not in a post-September 11th world.”³³ Powell also presented tape recordings to the UN with conversations between Iraqi officers about evacuating certain materials from facilities before weapons inspectors entered the country.³⁴ Powell also says in his speech that the U.S. has satellite photos showing that banned materials were moved from Iraqi WMD facilities.³⁵ Given Powell’s confidence in his speech to the UN, one would have to assume that the United States really did have sufficient evidence to make such claims. The Bush administration wanted to make its case clear that Saddam Hussein was a threat to the national security of the United States and the rest of the free world, especially in the UN. One would have to assume that the Bush administration made sure that everything that Secretary Powell presented to the UN in his speech was supported by evidence. The purpose of Powell’s speech was to present the evidence of

³⁰ Ibid, 101.

³¹ Ibid, 101.

³² Ibid, 101.

³³ Ibid, 102.

³⁴ Colin Powell. “A policy of Evasion and Deception.” The Washington Post (accessed October 19, 2010) 2.

³⁵ Ibid, 4.

WMD in Iraq and to gain the support of the UN so that when the U.S. did take action it was not doing so alone.

In another attempt to gain support for action in Iraq, President Bush gave a speech in Cincinnati on October 7, 2002, outlining the extent of Iraq's threat to the United States. President Bush points out the danger of Iraq's regime saying, "It possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons."³⁶ Bush distinguishes the threat of Iraq from other potential threats proclaiming that "Iraq's weapons of mass destruction are controlled by a murderous tyrant who has already used chemical weapons to kill thousands of people. This same tyrant has tried to dominate the Middle East, has invaded and brutally occupied a small neighbor, has struck other nations without warning, and holds an unrelenting hostility toward the United States."³⁷ In his speech, Bush successfully draws a distinction between the threat of Iraq and the threat of other nations and he makes it clear that Saddam Hussein is the deciding factor. Bush argues that the United States should not wait to confront Saddam Hussein because in doing so he will only grow stronger.³⁸ President Bush also points out in his speech that Iraq is trying to acquire high-strength aluminum tubes to make gas centrifuges, all for the purpose of producing enriched uranium for nuclear weapons.³⁹ Bush stressed the need to take

³⁶ John Ehrenberg and eds. *The Iraq Papers*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 85.

³⁷ Ibid, 85.

³⁸ Ibid, 86.

³⁹ Ibid, 87.

action: “Facing evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun, that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.”⁴⁰

President Bush makes a strong argument for why Iraq poses a serious threat to the United States and why action needs to be taken. By the time Bush gave his speech in Cincinnati, he was already fairly certain that the United States would have to take military action. However, he wanted to gain as much support as possible and take whatever diplomatic measures were necessary before risking American lives. Based on the evidence that Bush provided in his Cincinnati speech along with Colin Powell’s speech to the UN, many people felt that Iraq posed a serious threat to the free world under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. This belief was rooted in the Bush administration’s assurance that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, and that it was in the process of developing nuclear weapons, which they could have within a year once they obtained the weapons grade fissile material if nothing was done. The allegations of WMD presented to the American people and the rest of the world as reasoning behind the war were extremely bold statements that the Bush administration knew it would have to live up to and answer for if WMD were never found.

In retrospect it is hard to fathom how the Bush administration could have come up with so much intelligence pointing to the existence of WMD in Iraq when none of the weapons were found after the invasion. The Bush administration seemed certain that WMD were present in Iraq and that for the sake of national security military intervention was necessary because Saddam Hussein’s regime was not complying with UN weapons

⁴⁰ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 202.

inspections. The fact that the Bush administration went to the UN with all of its intelligence regarding WMD and in the end no weapons were found hurt the administration's credibility. While the Bush administration should not have portrayed the intelligence to be completely factual, it does not change the fact that there was still a degree of uncertainty in respect to Iraq, and this did pose a threat. Furthermore the Bush administration chose to invade Iraq based on preemption. It did not want to risk the possibility of another terrorist or nuclear attack because it did not have conclusive evidence. The Bush administration knew that it had to act quickly because if it waited too long Hussein might obtain nuclear weapons.⁴¹ If the Bush administration waited, it could have attained more conclusive intelligence, but by then it might have been too late and the intelligence would have been irrelevant. Furthermore, the Bush administration did give the weapons inspectors a chance to find the weapons stockpiles before it took military action. In March 2003, Hans Blix, the chief weapons inspector, reported to the UN Security Council that the WMD that were unaccounted for in 1998 were still unaccounted for.⁴² These weapons consisted of

...3.9 tons of VX nerve agent; 6,526 aerial chemical bombs; 550 mustard gas shells; 2,062 tons of Mustard precursors; some 15,000 empty 12-mm chemical rocket warheads; 8,445 liters of anthrax; growth media that could have produced 3,000-11,000 liters of botulinum toxin, 6,000-16,000 litres of anthrax, up to 5,600 liters of *Clostridium perfringens*, and a significant quantity of an unknown bacterial agent; at a minimum 16-30 structural rings for missiles; and at least 15 special warheads.⁴³

⁴¹ A Report of the Project for the New American Century. "Iraq: Setting the Record Straight" (Washington D.C. 2005), iii.

⁴² Ibid, v.

⁴³ Ibid, v.

Although there is no mention of nuclear weapons in this list, it is nevertheless an extensive list of unaccounted for weapons that could kill hundreds of thousands of people.

The Iraq Survey Group, formed in order to conduct a survey of Iraq's weapons programs after the invasion, reported to have uncovered several activities related to WMD programs going on in Iraq. Originally headed by David Kay, the Iraq Survey Group discovered a hidden network of laboratories; a prison laboratory complex, "reference strains" for biological weapons, research on agents linked to biological weapons, and advanced planning on missiles with ranges up to 1,000 kilometers.⁴⁴ After David Kay stepped down, Charles Duelfer was appointed to take over the Iraq Survey Group. Although Duelfer did not report specific evidence the way that Kay had, Duelfer also reported his own findings regarding Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. Duelfer reported that as UN sanctions became weaker and weaker there was a definite increase in activities related to the development of WMD, Saddam Hussein never abandoned his objective to continue producing chemical weapons, two of Saddam Hussein's goals were to recover economically and rebuild Iraq's WMD programs after the first Gulf War, and Saddam Hussein's regime intended to resume its WMD program after UN sanctions were lifted all along.⁴⁵ However, this list of unaccounted for weapons provided by the weapons inspectors along with the findings of the Iraq Survey Group were not the deciding factor for the United States to go to war. "The case for war, in short, did not rest exclusively on the existence of stockpiles. It derived from a perception of Saddam's intentions and capabilities, both existing and potential, and was grounded in the reality of

⁴⁴ Ibid, ix.

⁴⁵ Ibid, x.

Saddam's prior behavior.”⁴⁶ Relying on the notion of preemption as a means of national security, this reasoning is the most logical explanation for why the Bush administration decided to launch the invasion.

Although Iraq had been a high priority for the Bush administration ever since the president took office, the administration still needed to weigh all of the evidence and consider all of its options before it took the nation into a war that would affect the entire Middle East. The Bush administration may have considered Iraq a threat since 2000, but it was only after 9/11 that the administration started thinking seriously about taking action. This can be attributed to the changed mentality of the entire nation after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The Bush administration wanted regime change in Iraq, and it had a lot of reasons to believe that regime change was necessary. In March of 2003 the Bush administration was influenced by an accumulation of evidence: Saddam Hussein's long history of mass murdering, ethnic cleansing, aiding terrorists, and violating UN resolutions; the view of former officials in the Clinton administration that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction stockpiles; reports from UN inspectors about unaccounted for weapons; and the fact that intelligence prior to the first Gulf War had underestimated Iraq's nuclear capabilities.⁴⁷ The last thing the Bush administration wanted to do was make the mistake of underestimating Iraq's strength and have it backfire on the United States.

Given the nature of the threat that the Bush administration perceived in Saddam Hussein's regime, it might seem like the Bush administration wanted to remove Saddam

⁴⁶ Ibid, viii.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 16.

Hussein from power regardless of whether or not he possessed WMD. However, the fact remains that Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons in the past and there was legitimate reason to believe that he still possessed some of these weapons and he intended on developing nuclear weapons. In the eyes of the Bush administration, this was good enough to take the appropriate steps toward war. Based on the October 2002 NIE, which reported that Saddam Hussein still possessed chemical and biological weapons and was trying to get nuclear weapons, the Bush administration had the evidence it needed to support its invasion of Iraq.

The Bush administration then set out to gain support both from the UN and the American people. At the UN the Bush administration sought Resolution 1441 from the Security Council to justify that “Iraq would face ‘serious consequences’ as a result of continued violations.”⁴⁸ On November 8, 2002 Resolution 1441 was passed by a unanimous vote of 15 to 0.⁴⁹ This signified a major breakthrough in diplomacy for the United States. By taking diplomatic measures through the UN the Bush administration showed that it wanted the disarmament of Iraq above all things and it did not intend to go to war unless it was the last resort. It was only after the Iraqi regime did not comply with UN Resolution 1441 that Colin Powell made his speech to the UN arguing that the United States had factual evidence of WMD in Iraq and therefore the United States was justified in going into Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein from power.

⁴⁸ John Ehrenberg and eds. *The Iraq Papers*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 96-99.

⁴⁹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 226.

President Bush's speech in Cincinnati along with other speeches made clear to the American people that there was evidence of WMD in Iraq and due to the previous behavior of Saddam Hussein, military action seemed likely. With all the certainty surrounded by Colin Powell's speech to the UN along with President Bush's speeches it was clear to the public at the time that Iraq posed a major threat to the national security of the United States and therefore military action was necessary. Due to the nature of the war in Iraq that was conducted under preemption, the intelligence of WMD in Iraq was crucial and the Bush administration placed a great deal of emphasis on it. Since the Bush administration was taking the offensive in hopes of preventing further aggression toward the United States, it had to be sure that its allegations concerning WMD were strongly supported; otherwise, the administration would have a serious problem if no WMD were found. If the Bush administration placed the onus of its decision to go to war on the fact that it was uncertain about Saddam Hussein's capabilities and it did not want to risk another tragedy, the sentiment might have been different. However, the Bush administration weighed its decision to go to war heavily on its certainty that there were WMD in Iraq and therefore the success or failure on the decision for war relied heavily on whether or not the WMD were found. One of the only explanations for why no WMD were found after the invasion was the conclusion that Saddam Hussein had a hidden weapons program.⁵⁰ However it was more likely that no WMD were found because the intelligence was flawed and politicized by the Bush administration.

⁵⁰ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 219.

CHAPTER FOUR: FAILED INTELLIGENCE AND POLITICIZATION

In March of 2003 the United States embarked on a mission to take over Iraq and in the process overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein and disarm the country of its WMD. The process of forming a military strategy for the war took a very long time, and the process of gaining the support of the American people as well as the rest of the world

took even longer. Attempts at diplomacy were prolonged by the entire UN resolution process along with the Bush administration trying to get as much support from the free world as possible in order to build a respectable coalition. However, this coalition was formed on the foundation that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed WMD, a foundation that the Bush administration supported publicly on numerous accounts. If the American people along with the rest of the world had not been confident in the accuracy of the claims of the Bush administration, they likely would not have supported the war in the same fashion. However, the fact that no WMD were found once the United States military invaded Iraq left the entire world wondering why no WMD were found. On January 28, 2004, David Kay, head of the Iraq Survey Group, said that 85 percent of the work was done and that he didn't ever think they would find WMD.⁵¹ After this, the Bush administration placed the blame on the Intelligence Community and a failure of intelligence. The Bush administration proposed an independent bipartisan commission designed to investigate WMD and intelligence problems.⁵² The Intelligence Community argued that it was not a failure of intelligence, but instead it was the way in which the administration interpreted the intelligence in order to support its objectives. As I will show, both the Intelligence Community and the Bush administration were at fault for making such a strong case for the presence of WMD. It is unfortunate that this failure of the Bush administration and the Intelligence Community could not be seen before the war, however, the fact remains that the intelligence of WMD in Iraq should have never been presented to the public as conclusive and the primary reason for why the United

⁵¹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 434.

⁵² Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 435.

States needed to take military action. A report by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which conducted an investigation into the Intelligence Community's assessments of Iraq before the war, depicts how there was a failure of intelligence in gathering enough conclusive information on the extent of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. Furthermore the investigation by the Iraq Survey Group also shows that our intelligence on Iraq leading up to the war was not consistent with the true nature of what weapons were actually in Iraq. The failure of intelligence was not the only problem with the allegations of WMD in Iraq. The personal account of George Tenet, director of the CIA during the Clinton and Bush administrations, illustrates how the CIA's intelligence was misinterpreted as well as politicized by the Bush administration in order to support its foreign policy objectives. This is not to say that the United States should not have waged a war in Iraq. Iraq did pose a threat to the national security of the United States. The issue is that the Bush administration used insufficient evidence to support its claims that WMD were present in Iraq when in actuality they were making these claims under false pretenses. There is no doubt that the United States and its allies were safer after the invasion of Iraq however it was at the expense of the Bush administration making inaccurate assumptions to the world supported by failed intelligence.

The Bush administration set out to conduct a war based on preemption for the sake of national security. Due to the fact that it was not reacting to an imminent threat but instead trying to prevent and remove a potential threat, the Bush administration relied heavily on intelligence provided by the CIA that would provide it with the information needed in order to make a well-informed decision. The October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate acted as the primary source of this information and was the basis

under which the Bush administration would make its decisions on Iraq. However, the October 2002 NIE proved to be inaccurate only after the fact. Furthermore, the Bush administration's failure to interpret the intelligence correctly was exposed by George Tenet's personal account as well as numerous other accounts of the events leading up to the 2003 invasion.

In June of 2003 the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence conducted an investigation of the Intelligence Community titled "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq." The investigation looked into the prewar intelligence on Iraq's WMD programs, Iraq's ties to terrorism, Saddam Hussein's threat to the region, and his previous use of WMD against his own people.⁵³ The main objective of the report was to decide whether the judgments made by the Intelligence Community regarding WMD in Iraq were sound and accurate.⁵⁴ One of the conclusions of the report was that "the major key judgments in the NIE, particularly that Iraq 'is reconstituting its nuclear program...has chemical and biological weapons,' either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting..."⁵⁵ The fact that Iraq tried to deceive UN weapons inspectors for years along with the fact that Iraq could not account for chemical and biological weapons may have led CIA analysts to believe that Iraq still had these weapons.⁵⁶ However this was an assumption on the part of the analysts due to the fact that they did not have information to prove this for certain. Another conclusion of the Senate Committee's report was that the analysts did not make

⁵³ U.S. Congress. Senate. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq", 108th Congress, June 2003, 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid, Section B: Weapons of Mass Destruction Capabilities

⁵⁶ Ibid, Conclusion 1.

clear to policymakers the uncertainties surrounding the NIE.⁵⁷ The report states: “At the time the IC drafted and coordinated the NIE on Iraq’s WMD programs in September 2002, most of what intelligence analysts actually ‘knew’ about Iraq’s weapons programs pre-dated the 1991 Gulf War, leaving them with very little direct knowledge about the current state of those programs.”⁵⁸ One of the major problems with the NIE was that most of the known facts used by the analysts about Iraq’s weapons programs came from before the first Gulf War, more than a decade before.⁵⁹ Therefore analysts did not know as much as they appeared to know. Another conclusion drawn from the report was that there was an underlying presumption within the Intelligence Community that Iraq had a growing WMD program.⁶⁰ This presumption led analysts to infer that certain ambiguous evidence actually pointed to a WMD program.⁶¹ This dynamic is known as “group think” and is defined as “...examining few alternatives, selective gathering of information, pressure to conform within the group or withhold criticism, and collective rationalization.”⁶² The “group think” dynamic that perpetuated itself throughout the Intelligence Community proved to be very detrimental to the entire intelligence gathering process. Everyone was acting under the notion that there were WMD in Iraq and therefore whatever intelligence analysts collected was automatically assumed to support this underlying notion. What was worse was that no one was able to stand up and make the argument that the intelligence was only supporting one side and it was not considering other possible options. Another problem was that when there was

⁵⁷ Ibid, Conclusion 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid, Conclusion 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid, Conclusion 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid, Conclusion 3.

⁶¹ Ibid, Conclusion 3.

⁶² Ibid, Conclusion 3.

information that did not support the WMD claims, analysts chose not to report it. For example, weapons inspections in November of 2002 did not find any traces of active WMD programs however analysts did not think this was significant and thus chose not to report it.⁶³ The fourth conclusion of the report was that the assessments in the NIE were based on judgments, and the uncertainties surrounding those particular judgments were never considered.⁶⁴ While these judgments may have been logical, the fact that they were treated as truths without ever considering the uncertainty turned out to be a huge problem and was the main reason why the Intelligence Community concluded that WMD were actually in Iraq. The fifth conclusion of the report was that managers of the analysts within the Intelligence Community failed to facilitate the intelligence process in the sense that they did not challenge assumptions or consider possible alternatives.⁶⁵ The sixth conclusion of the report was that the Intelligence Community did not have any additional sources on WMD programs in Iraq after 1998.⁶⁶ The fact that there was no real new information after 1998 highlights a huge failure in the intelligence process. A lot could have happened between 1998 and 2002 when the NIE was published and the analysts failed to recognize this giant gap in their intelligence. The seventh conclusion of the report was that the CIA failed to share certain information and in some cases withheld information from the rest of the Intelligence Community.⁶⁷ In so doing the CIA created a disadvantage for the entire Intelligence Community because no one was on the same page.

⁶³ Ibid, Conclusion 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid, Conclusion 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid, Conclusion 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid, Conclusion 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid, Conclusion 7.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's report also examined the Niger uranium case. There was some intelligence dating to 1991 that Iraq was attempting to acquire yellowcake uranium from Niger. The attainment of this uranium would have given Iraq the last ingredient needed to complete its nuclear capabilities. The CIA was not certain that the exchange of uranium between Iraq and Niger actually happened; however, it did report that the two countries had been negotiating the shipment for some time.⁶⁸ The CIA supposedly had intelligence of a foreign government service saying that Iraq was attempting to get 500 tons of uranium from Niger.⁶⁹ In addition, a CIA nuclear analyst believed that Iraq could have been trying to get uranium from Africa and Niger could have possibly supplied Iraq with the necessary amount.⁷⁰ While it was possible for Iraq to have been trying to get uranium from Niger, the intelligence was not nearly strong enough to place any level of confidence on the idea. The problem with this intelligence was that it was included in the NIE under the assumption that there was a good chance it was true and that Iraq actually was procuring uranium from Niger. However, the only thing the intelligence supported was that Niger did have uranium and Iraq was trying to get uranium. There was no intelligence supporting a link between the two countries however it was alluded to in the NIE as if it were.

The report that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence put together clearly illustrates how the Intelligence Community improperly carried out the intelligence gathering process. The report points out the biased approach taken by the Intelligence Community as well as the exaggeration of certain evidence. The biggest problem of the

⁶⁸ Ibid, Niger.

⁶⁹ Ibid, Continuing Analysis.

⁷⁰ Ibid, Continuing Analysis.

October 2002 NIE was that the CIA set out to put it together with the mindset that there were WMD in Iraq. This reflected on the entire NIE and as a result no attention was paid to the alternatives. There was a degree of uncertainty pertaining to Iraq's WMD programs and many of the analysts equated this uncertainty to mean that there were WMD in existence in Iraq. The analysts never considered the fact that while Iraq did have some weapons program capabilities there actually were not any stockpiles of weapons. The fact that the NIE takes such a strong stance on the existence of WMD in Iraq and its nuclear capabilities was reflected in the Bush administration's decision to go to war. The Bush administration used a great deal of the information in the NIE to justify its claims that Saddam Hussein possessed WMD and it presented these claims to the United Nations and the American people as a reason to take action against Iraq. If the intelligence process had been carried out with more discretion and if the analysts had considered all of the possible options, the NIE might not have been as conclusive and therefore the Bush administration would not have appeared as certain that WMD were in Iraq and that it posed a major threat to national security.

The findings of the Iraq Survey Group after the invasion also support the claim that there was an intelligence failure leading up to the war. The Iraq Survey Group Final Report offers valuable insight into the capabilities of Iraq's weapons programs, Iraq's potential for nuclear weapons, and Saddam Hussein's intent regarding WMD. The ISG's final report makes several claims that Saddam Hussein wanted to remove UN sanctions as well as rebuild his WMD capabilities. Saddam Hussein believed that WMD were essential to the survival of his regime and he also felt that he had the right to possess such

weapons.⁷¹ It was almost as if Saddam Hussein was obsessed with obtaining WMD capabilities. He felt that possession of WMD would be helpful in countering any threat from Iran or Israel, whom he viewed as primary threats.⁷² Although Israel is an ally of the United States, Saddam Hussein did not consider the United States as a direct threat.⁷³ Saddam Hussein definitely intended to rebuild his WMD programs as well as try to lift UN sanctions.⁷⁴ However it is unclear for what purpose he intended to do so. Saddam Hussein would have obviously been very dangerous with WMD and he had used chemical weapons in the past; however, the ISG found no indication that he wanted to use WMD against the United States or that he even possessed them following the Gulf War. It is true that Saddam Hussein did not comply with specific UN resolutions and that he did make attempts to deceive weapons inspections. However, the ISG states in its report that it did not find evidence of any WMD stockpiles following the 2003 invasion but that there is the possibility that some weapons did exist based on interviews and documents.⁷⁵

The big question is why was Saddam Hussein being so secretive during the weapons inspections if he did not have major stockpiles of WMD? One possibility is that he did have stockpiles and therefore it was necessary to hide them. There is also the possibility that he didn't have WMD stockpiles, but may have wanted to make it look like he did. The reason for this would have been to prevent any kind of attack out of fear that

⁷¹ "Iraq Survey Group Final Report"
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/2004/isg-finalreport/>, Saddam's Role in WMD Policy.

⁷² Ibid, What Saddam Thought: External Concern.

⁷³ Ibid, What Saddam Thought: External Concern.

⁷⁴ Ibid, Scientific Research and Intention to Reconstitute WMD.

⁷⁵ Ibid, Sorting Out Whether Iraq Had WMD Before Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Saddam Hussein would use WMD on any aggressors. The ISG makes it clear that Saddam Hussein desired the possession of WMD for the interests of his regime. There is uncertainty whether he would have used these weapons against his enemies or simply as a deterrent. However, the ISG did not find any evidence of the existence of WMD in Iraq before Operation Iraqi Freedom. Furthermore no evidence was found to support the claim that Iraq was trying to obtain uranium from another country or even try to produce uranium indigenously.⁷⁶ Also the ISG did not find any evidence to support the idea that Iraq was trying to get aluminum tubes for the purpose of nuclear weapons.⁷⁷ Instead the aluminum tubes were most likely for the production of rockets.⁷⁸ When reading the ISG's final report one must take into account that its survey was conducted after Operation Iraqi Freedom so there is the possibility that any evidence of WMD stockpiles was destroyed before they could get to it. Nevertheless the ISG conducted an extensive survey in which they interviewed several members of Saddam Hussein's regime and studied numerous documents on Iraq's weapons programs. Its findings do suggest that Saddam Hussein did want WMD and that he did have weapons programs. Its findings do not provide any evidence that Saddam Hussein had chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons following the Gulf War of 1991. These findings show that the intelligence provided by the Intelligence Community prior to the war was not solid. A large amount of the intelligence was exaggerated to support existing judgments. Also the Intelligence Community did not consider the possibility that Saddam Hussein was hiding his weapons capabilities or lack thereof for the sake of Iraq's national security, not for use against the

⁷⁶ Ibid, Investigation Into Uranium Pursuits and Indigenous Production Capabilities.

⁷⁷ Ibid, Aluminum Tube Investigation.

⁷⁸ Ibid, Aluminum Tube Investigation.

United States. The Intelligence Community never formally informed the Bush administration of these possibilities and as a result the intelligence that there were WMD in Iraq was highly mischaracterized. The failure of intelligence was not the only mistake made prior to the invasion of Iraq. The blame also falls on the Bush administration for interpreting the intelligence in a way that would support its objectives and then presenting it to the public as if it were a fact.

George Tenet played a crucial role in the intelligence process and in the final decision to go to war by the Bush administration. As Director of the CIA, Tenet was in direct contact with the Bush administration during the entire period before the war and during the war as well. Tenet offers keen insight on how the decision process unfolded and his personal account illustrates how the Bush administration in many ways abused the intelligence it was provided in order to get its point across about WMD in Iraq. Tenet recognizes the fact that foreign policy changed after 9/11. The Bush administration used 9/11 as motivation to act against any danger of Iraq's WMD programs.⁷⁹ Unfortunately the costs and benefits of preemptive action were never debated within the administration.⁸⁰ This can be seen from the attitudes of those involved in preparing the U.S. military that sensed very early on the inevitability of the upcoming war.⁸¹ Many critics today believe that the Bush administration was fixing the intelligence around the policy instead of the other way around. However according to Richard Dearlove, head of MI-6 in Great Britain, "...the cause for war was more about the politics in the Middle

⁷⁹ George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007) 305.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 305.

⁸¹ Ibid, 309.

East, not WMD, and the intelligence was just being used in an undisciplined manner.”⁸²

It is clear that the Bush administration considered Iraq to be a top priority in terms of foreign policy. However the way the Bush administration portrayed the war as necessary because of Saddam Hussein’s WMD was wrong. In 2002 Vice President Dick Cheney gave a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in which he stated ...”there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction...he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us...Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons very soon.”⁸³ Cheney should have never made these statements to the public. While these statements may have been beliefs of the Bush administration, they were not facts supported by solid intelligence. In fact, Tenet makes it clear that the CIA never cleared Cheney’s speech and his statements overstepped the bounds of what the CIA’s intelligence could support.⁸⁴ The more reasonable belief held by the CIA was that Iraq probably could not obtain nuclear weapons until the end of the decade.⁸⁵ This implies that Iraq would not have the weapons grade material needed to build a nuclear weapon for several more years and then it would take at least a year longer to build the weapon once it had the material.

The case for WMD was clearly not the only reason the Bush administration wanted to go to war in Iraq. The removal of Saddam Hussein along with a democracy in the Middle East was both very appealing to the Bush administration. The reason why so much emphasis was placed on the case for WMD was that it received a great deal of attention from the public. The imminence of a nuclear threat would encourage action

⁸² Ibid, 310.

⁸³ Ibid, 315.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 315.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 315.

above all things. The Bush administration knew that if it could sell the case for WMD in Iraq, it would gain tremendous support for the war. The October 2002 NIE was created for this purpose. Tenet, reluctant to carry out the formation of the NIE, knew he had no choice saying, "...we don't make policy. Our job is to tell the people who do what we know and what we think. It's up to them to decide what to do about it."⁸⁶ However a large portion of the intelligence in the October NIE was taken from previously published documents because of time constraints.⁸⁷ So in reality the October 2002 did have some new intelligence, however, it also regurgitated old intelligence that might not have been relevant at the time.

Also, the section in the NIE about yellowcake uranium was taken out of context. The NIE acknowledged the possibility that Saddam Hussein could acquire the yellowcake from Niger; however, it did not say that this was very likely.⁸⁸ The Bush administration only paid attention to the part regarding Niger and made allegations that there were negotiations for the uranium between the two countries when this in fact was not very likely at all. President Bush made a huge mistake by addressing the case of enriched uranium from Niger in his State of the Union Address in January 2003. Bush declared, "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."⁸⁹ Tenet had earlier made it clear that the statement about uranium from Niger should not be included in any speeches because it

⁸⁶ Ibid, 324.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 324.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 326.

⁸⁹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 294.

could not be confirmed.⁹⁰ Furthermore Ambassador Joseph Wilson went public in a piece in the *New York Times* on July 6, 2003 titled “What I Didn’t Find in Africa” saying, “There was never any evidence of Iraqi uranium purchases from Niger.”⁹¹ Ambassador Wilson had previously spent time in Africa and he was asked by the Bush administration to go to Niger to confirm whether or not the allegations that Iraq had received yellowcake uranium from Niger were true. Ambassador Wilson reported back that there was no evidence to support such allegations. Nevertheless the Bush administration still decided to include the allegations of uranium from Niger in the President’s State of the Union address, most likely to make the case for war more convincing to the public. Wilson’s main point in his piece was that the Bush administration knew it was putting a lie into the President’s speech and nothing was done about it. After Wilson went public the Bush administration fired back at Wilson in an attempt to make his statement less credible. For example, Ari Fleischer, President Bush’s press secretary, told the media that Wilson was responsible for the Niger government’s denial of the uranium deal saying, “Wouldn’t any government deny it?”⁹² Another example came from Clifford May who suggested that Wilson went public because he was a partisan Democrat.⁹³ The Bush administration also sought to exploit Wilson’s wife, Valerie Plame, who worked for the CIA as a spy. Robert Novak wrote a column in the *Washington Post* on July 14, 2003 saying, “Wilson never worked for the CIA, but his wife, Valerie Plame, is an agency operative on weapons of mass destruction. Two senior administration officials told me Wilson’s wife

⁹⁰ Ibid, 294-295.

⁹¹ Joseph Wilson, *The Politics of Truth: Inside the Lies that Led to War and Betrayed my Wife’s CIA Identity* (New York: Carroll & Graff Publishers, 2004) 334.

⁹² Ibid, 336.

⁹³ Ibid, 337.

suggested sending him to Niger to investigate the Italian report.”⁹⁴ There was no benefit to revealing Plame’s identity other than to intimidate Wilson after he took his case public and made the Bush administration look bad for including such an outright lie in the President’s speech. The Bush administration most likely employed these intimidation tactics to discourage anyone else from going public. The administration obviously had something to hide.

While the Bush administration used the intelligence on Iraq to its advantage, Tenet argues that it did not directly influence the intelligence gathering process. The intelligence itself was flawed and it did not correctly assess the reality of the situation in Iraq however policymakers did not attempt to influence analysts to report certain things.⁹⁵ On the other hand, the Bush administration did politicize the intelligence in an attempt to make it appear more convincing to the public. In doing so, the Bush administration only used intelligence that would support its arguments about WMD, and it did not inform the public of other intelligence.

There was a definite process of preparing the intelligence on WMD to be presented to the public. The Bush administration wanted to make sure it had all the intelligence possible to present to the public, and it wanted it to be believable. At a meeting in December, 2002, Tenet and other intelligence officials were supposed to present information on Iraq’s WMD that was true and that could also be presented to the

⁹⁴ Robert D. Novak, "Mission to Niger," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2003, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/10/20/AR2005102000874.html> (accessed November 28, 2010).

⁹⁵ George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007) 336.

public.⁹⁶ When this meeting took place everyone in the National Security Council already believed that chemical and biological weapons were in Saddam Hussein's arsenal and he was developing nuclear weapons.⁹⁷ The purpose of the meeting was only to decide how to take the case public. In the meeting Tenet discussed the possibility that the public case could include satellite photos, communications intercepts, and human intelligence reports to give the public a better understanding.⁹⁸ Tenet reassured President Bush that the public case was a "slam dunk."⁹⁹ Tenet's quote was later exaggerated as the deciding factor for going to war. However, this comment from Tenet came only three months before the invasion and the Bush administration had already made serious plans for war. One account portrays Tenet jumping in the air shouting, "It's a slam dunk case!" and from that point on the President was convinced.¹⁰⁰ This portrayal makes it seem like Tenet was the deciding factor in the decision to go to war when in actuality this was not the case at all. Tenet's "slam dunk" remark may have been dramatized for the sake of drawing attention away from President Bush. While Tenet did believe that WMD in Iraq would be an easy case, his comment was interpreted to be the final straw in Bush's decision to go to war. His comment was exaggerated in the same way that the intelligence was exaggerated. Furthermore, after the meeting in which Tenet made this quote President Bush told the CIA to put together the best information it had on WMD

⁹⁶ Ibid, 361.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 361.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 362.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 362.

¹⁰⁰ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 249.

into a document.¹⁰¹ This is an example of how the Bush administration only paid attention to intelligence on the existence of WMD without considering any of the alternative intelligence. The Bush administration knew it wanted to take action in Iraq early on in the administration and it had intelligence, according to the administration, of Saddam Hussein's WMD programs. The big hurdle for the Bush administration was making a case to the public that justified war.

The case that the Bush administration made to the public determined whether or not the United States would go to war. If the United States did not have popular support, it would have been far more difficult to launch an invasion of Iraq. Due to the fact that it was a war of preemption, public support was necessary. It was imperative for the Bush administration to make a strong case for WMD in Iraq if it wanted to take military action. The Bush administration's case for WMD was also presented to the public in Colin Powell's speech to the UN on February 5, 2003. Powell worked very closely with the CIA to come up with his speech. While Powell's speech did end up producing the desired effect of the Bush administration, a great deal of the information used in his speech did not hold up. One particular part referenced an Iraqi spy codenamed CURVEBALL who supposedly revealed information of the locations of certain chemical and biological weapons laboratories in Iraq.¹⁰² Unfortunately the information provided by CURVEBALL did not pan out and as a result Powell's speech lost credibility. In

¹⁰¹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 288.

¹⁰² George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007) 375.

many ways the CIA did allow bad information to fall into the hands of policymakers and Tenet acknowledges this fact.¹⁰³

While Powell was preparing his speech to the UN he realized that human sources on Iraq's WMD were scarce and he was influenced a great deal by Saddam Hussein's past behavior which entailed the use of WMD in the 1980's and the concealment of WMD in the 1990's.¹⁰⁴ As a result the United Nations and the rest of the world were presented with information that they considered to be factual when in actuality it was information that the Bush administration believed to be possible. At the same time, the Bush administration never took the initiative to question the intelligence or possible alternatives. The administration accepted the intelligence for what it was worth and used it to its advantage.

When an administration goes to war, it has to make a case for why the war is justified. The Bush administration had several reasons for why it felt a war in Iraq was justified. However, it chose to present the case for WMD to the public because it believed it had the most intelligence to support that case. Furthermore the UN had been trying to conduct effective weapons inspections for WMD in Iraq for years. There is no doubt that WMD in Iraq was an issue, but the Bush administration took the issue to another level by telling the public that there were WMD stockpiles in Iraq because of solid intelligence. The analysts who put together the October 2002 NIE should not have been as conclusive in reporting the evidence and Colin Powell should not have made his case so absolute in his speech to the United Nations.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 383.

¹⁰⁴ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 298.

It is evident that the Bush administration exaggerated the intelligence on Iraq's WMD in order to make its reasoning for war appear more viable. However, the Bush administration did consider the threat of WMD in Iraq a serious one, otherwise the invasion forces would not have prepared for the possibility of a chemical or biological attack.¹⁰⁵ The threat was known but the actual extent and danger of the threat is what was disputed. Up until the October 2002 NIE, the CIA made sure to say that it was possible for Iraq to have weapons stockpiles.¹⁰⁶ The CIA's stance became more certain only after the NIE was reported in which the CIA believed there to be a presence of chemical weapons stockpiles in Iraq.¹⁰⁷ Because the 2002 NIE did not contain very much new information, it is difficult to understand why there was a sudden shift in the stance of the CIA on WMD in Iraq. Perhaps the CIA and the rest of the Intelligence Community knew by this time that the Bush administration was set on war and so the CIA reported what it thought the Bush administration wanted to hear. Another possibility is that the CIA honestly felt that Iraq posed a threat to national security and that based on the Bush Doctrine of preemption war was inevitable. This however does not excuse the fact that certain intelligence such as the October 2002 NIE contained beliefs and possibilities that were presented as certainties. The underlying problem lies in the manner in which the Bush administration presented its case to the public. The Bush administration was so certain about the presence of WMD in Iraq that it led many to believe that Saddam Hussein really did have WMD and that he intended on using them. Colin Powell's

¹⁰⁵ John Diamond, *The CIA and the Culture of Failure: U.S. Intelligence from the End of the Cold War to the Invasion of Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) 282.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 380.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 380.

speech to the United Nations, along with speeches from President Bush and Vice President Cheney, embodies this unwarranted certainty from the Bush administration.

It is unfortunate that most of the failures within the Intelligence Community were not discovered until after the fact. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's report illustrates how the October 2002 NIE was not a document that should have been used to guarantee WMD in Iraq. Sources have shown that the intelligence of yellowcake uranium from Niger was not solid intelligence. Also, the proposal that aluminum tubes acquired by Iraq for the development of nuclear weapons was not supported by credible intelligence either. The only solid intelligence that should have been regarded as reliable was the assessment that Iraq could potentially have nuclear capabilities in a decade, Iraq had not adhered to the UN Security Resolutions since the Gulf War, and Saddam Hussein had engaged in deception in attempts to hide certain things from UN weapons inspectors. Otherwise there was no solid intelligence of the existence of weapons stockpiles in Iraq. Even if the intelligence process prior to the war had been conducted correctly with all the options considered, it is difficult to think that the Bush administration might have made a different decision. The fault of the Bush administration lies in the fact that it made a case to the public that was not supported by legitimate intelligence. While the CIA is at fault for this, the Bush administration must also be held accountable since it did not take an unbiased approach to assessing the intelligence. Instead of portraying its motive in Iraq as preemption and the establishment of democracy in the Middle East, the Bush administration believed it was necessary to make a case for the existence of WMD in Iraq. In doing so the Bush administration misled the public and made justification for war under false pretenses.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES

The Bush administration viewed Iraq as a foreign policy objective ever since it took office in 2000 and plans for war were being prepared over a year before the actual invasion. One cannot assume that the Bush administration would have decided not to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom unless there was absolute certainty that WMD were nonexistent in Iraq. This intelligence never existed and so the Bush administration chose action instead of running the risk of an expanding arsenal of WMD under the hand of a ruthless dictator. The Bush administration did not want "...the smoking gun to be a

mushroom cloud.”¹⁰⁸ In President Bush’s ultimatum to Iraq before the invasion he made it clear that the United States intended to confront Saddam Hussein proclaiming “We meet that threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of firefighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities.”¹⁰⁹

Preemption arguably was the right decision in terms of United States foreign policy towards Iraq. Given the level of uncertainty and past actions of the Iraqi regime, the Bush administration wanted to err on the side of precaution. In this sense, the war in Iraq was the right decision. However, in another sense, the intelligence and the course of events leading up to the 2003 invasion were filled with bad decisions. For the sake of national security, military intervention was the right decision however the Bush administration’s attempt to justify the war turned out to be illegitimate. In many ways there was a failure of intelligence. The October 2002 NIE was put together by analysts who shared a common view that WMD were present in Iraq. Furthermore the NIE itself contained several conclusive statements about WMD stockpiles that should have been reported as judgments instead of facts. Also, the Intelligence Community failed to recognize possible alternatives. By only concentrating on the existence of WMD intelligence analysts failed to inform officials of the possibility that there were no WMD. Because of this the intelligence reported to the Bush administration was not as accurate as it was made out to be.

¹⁰⁸ At the Center of the Storm 305

¹⁰⁹ Plan of Attack 392

While the Intelligence Community did not report the intelligence on Iraq as accurately as it should have, the Bush administration also did not take an unbiased approach to interpreting it. In order to support its motive for war, the Bush administration engaged in “cherry-picking” and “stovepiping.”¹¹⁰ “Cherry-picking” is a term used to describe when officials embellish certain intelligence in order to support a policy and also downplay other intelligence that does not support the policy.¹¹¹ An example of this was when the Bush administration made a big deal about the Niger enrichment uranium case in an attempt to make it seem like Iraq was closer to a nuclear weapon than it actually was. The Bush administration did this without acknowledging other intelligence proposing that this was not very likely. “Stovepiping occurs when specific pieces of raw intelligence are reported directly to officials without putting them through the entire analyzation process.”¹¹² In some cases “stovepiping” may be warranted however “...when used to justify policies to the public they incorrectly imply the backing of the intelligence community.”¹¹³ An example of “stovepiping” is when the President’s State of the Union speech included a statement that the United States had evidence that Iraq obtained uranium from Niger. While there may have been intelligence reported to the President about this, the statement in the President’s speech was never cleared by the CIA. While there was a failure of intelligence, it is difficult to know if the intelligence really mattered in terms of whether or not the Bush administration chose to go to war in Iraq. President Bush probably would have made the decision even if the intelligence did

¹¹⁰ Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 132.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 132.

¹¹² Ibid, 132.

¹¹³ Ibid, 132.

not support claims of WMD due to the fact that Saddam Hussein wanted WMD, particularly nuclear weapons.¹¹⁴ It is evident that the Bush administration overstated the intelligence of WMD in Iraq to the public in order to make the threat appear more imminent than it actually was. While part of the blame falls on the Intelligence Community, the final call for war came from the Bush administration and for this reason it bears most of the responsibility for never finding WMD in Iraq.

The war in Iraq must be attributed to preemption instead of a search for WMD stockpiles. Although the Bush administration portrayed the war in Iraq as a mission to rid the country of its WMD programs, it was more a mission to protect national security and establish a democracy in the Middle East. There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein posed a serious threat to the United States due to his prior actions and his quest for nuclear weapons. However that threat was made more evident because of a failure of intelligence and its politicization by the Bush administration. Of course there was some intelligence that pointed to the possibility of WMD stockpiles in Iraq and going into the war the Bush administration did expect to find WMD. It was only after the fact that no WMD were found that the public realized that the Bush administration had misled them. The Bush administration most likely felt that in order to go to war the case of WMD had to look strong. While this was wrong in many ways it does not change the fact that the war in Iraq was a necessary act of preemption in order to protect the national security of the United States. By implementing the Bush Doctrine after 9/11, this is what President Bush set out to do. The war in Iraq was not simple by any means and thousands of Americans lost their lives fighting for their country. However, due to the fact that the

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 125.

Iraq war ended in August 2010, it has not been long enough to assess whether or not the war was successful in the long run. Because the war in Iraq is so recent, most people are critical of the Bush administration, for not finding any WMD following the invasion, without thinking about the bigger picture. Time will tell if the removal of a dictator and the establishment of a democracy in the Middle East was the right decision in terms of foreign policy. Although the Bush administration may have misled the public in justifying the war in Iraq, it acted in the best interest of the United States. The failure of intelligence and politicization by the Bush administration was a big mistake, but it does not outweigh the decision to take the fight to the enemy and protect the freedom of the American people.

